

CLAIMS

1. A tampon applicator assembly comprising:

5 (a) an expandable tampon adapted to be placed in a vagina to absorb body fluid, said tampon having a first end portion and a second end portion;

10 (b) a withdrawal member attached to at least one of said first end portion and said second end portion of said tampon, said withdrawal member including a stopping member; and

15 (c) a single piece applicator having a leading end portion and a trailing end portion, said leading end portion engaging said tampon, and said trailing end portion adapted to releasably secure said stopping member against movement in at least one direction.

20 2. The assembly of claim 1, wherein said trailing end portion of said single piece applicator comprises a channel adapted to receive said withdrawal member.

25 3. The assembly of claim 1, wherein said single piece applicator has a generally planar shape.

4. The assembly of claim 1, wherein said single piece applicator has a generally cylindrical cross-section.

30 5. The assembly of claim 4, wherein said single piece applicator has a hollow interior through which said withdrawal member passes.

6. The assembly of claim 5, wherein said single piece applicator has a generally elliptical cross-section.

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7. The assembly of claim 1, wherein said single piece applicator comprises at least one orientation indicator.

5 8. The assembly of claim 1, wherein said stopping member comprises a knot.

9. The assembly of claim 1, wherein said stopping member comprises a bead.

10. The assembly of claim 1, wherein said stopping member comprises a disk.

11. A tampon applicator assembly comprising:

15 (a) an expandable tampon adapted to be placed in a vagina and to absorb body fluid, said tampon having an expanded position and a contracted position; and

20 (b) a single piece applicator having a trailing end portion and a leading end portion, said leading end portion of said applicator engaging said tampon while said tampon is in its contracted position.

25 12. The assembly of claim 11, wherein said leading end portion is adapted to secure said tampon in its contracted position.

13. The assembly of claim 11, further comprising a withdrawal member attached with said tampon.

25 14. The assembly of claim 13, wherein said withdrawal member includes a stopping member.

30 15. The assembly of claim 14, wherein said trailing end portion is adapted to secure said stopping member against movement in at least one direction.

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16. The assembly of claim 11, further comprising a dissolvable band around at least a portion of said tampon, said band adapted to hold said tampon in its contracted position.

5 17. The assembly of claim 1, wherein said single piece applicator comprises at least one orientation indicator.

10 18. A method of using a tampon within a vagina, comprising:

(a) inserting a tampon applicator assembly into a vagina, said assembly including

(i) an expandable tampon adapted to absorb body fluid, said tampon having a first end portion and a second end portion;

(ii) a withdrawal member attached to at least one of said first end portion and said second end portion of said tampon, said withdrawal member including a stopping member; and

(iii) a single piece applicator having a leading end portion and a trailing end portion, said leading end portion engaging said tampon, and said trailing end portion adapted to releasably secure said stopping member against movement in at least one direction;

20 (b) releasing said tampon from said single piece applicator; and

(c) withdrawing said single piece applicator from the vagina.

25 19. The method of claim 18, wherein said assembly further comprises a withdrawal member having a first and second end portion, said first end portion attached with said tampon and second end portion releasably secured against movement in at least one direction by said applicator; and

30 wherein releasing said tampon includes releasing said withdrawal member from said applicator.

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20. The method of claim 18, wherein said assembly further comprises a dissolvable band positioned around at least a portion of said tampon to releasably hold said tampon against expansion; and wherein releasing said tampon includes dissolving said band.